



August 10, 2021

## **2021 Summer Committee Meeting Cover Letter**

Wow – I cannot believe we are coming together to plan for the fall already! What a great trip so far, Panel 70! I am grateful to each of you for your service, humility, and laughter, in these times of constant change.

Of course, I have our upcoming elections on my mind! Thank you to Robert S for publishing the Special Edition of Concepts last month with a focus on our upcoming elections. Coming to where and how we want to serve or continue to serve is no light matter. Please move into this next election in prayerful contemplation about where you can bring your gifts to serve us here in NIA20, if that is where you feel called to serve. We will work to bring you the best virtual election experience possible. Thank you to Robert S for working with us to prepare and trial run whatever process we land on. We are starting that work now.

During our Summer Assembly, we discussed quite a lot about two key areas: the future of our meetings, whether they be in person, virtual or some combination therein, and a motion around our Spring Assembly Conference. Here are some concerns and thoughts about each:

- **Our Area is very much in need for folks to serve on our Technology Committee.** Members can be appointed from anywhere inside our NIA 20 fellowship. Ideally, not from our already established elected committee – the role of this committee is ever-growing and for it to be collateral duty for seated trusted servants is a lot to ask. I am concerned that without an established group of folks dedicated to the below items, we will not be fully prepared to support virtual accessibility for future area events.
  - o Zoom Acct meeting and calendar management
  - o Zoom meeting and events production support
  - o Partnership with Electronics committee to ensure we have what we need
  - o Ongoing research to help us stay connected to tech trends in AA
  - o Offers recommendations to the Area to make changes, upgrades, purchases, etc.
- **The adhoc committee on the future of area meetings and planning for “back to meeting” will benefit from expertise in the areas of both technology and accessibilities.** Please consider reaching out to Erik L or any member of that committee to offer support and ideas. Of course, rising concerns about COVID variants is also a large part of any consideration we may have for the balance of this Panel 70 rotation and likely into the next.
- While our Summer Assembly did respond most favorably (50%) to a hybrid assembly format in September, it became clear through much discussion that we were not ready to go to a hybrid format for our Elections Assembly and that an in-person Assembly would diminish participation this year, all things considered, especially given the pandemic. **Consequently, we landed on a fully virtual Fall Assembly.**
- **Offering a virtual option for attendance at Area events should be a matter of accessibility, not convenience.** The Area does need to consider whether it wants to try to go hybrid and IF it can be done within our current setup. Moreover, now that we have an Accessibilities chair, this work could be done in partnership with Mike H and anyone else in the districts who serve in Accessibilities roles that might be able to help. **Given that, we need to take care to ensure we**



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**have the right things in place to be accommodating to a virtual audience, as needed.** We are simply not there yet.

- **We will call for formal bids for our 2023 Spring Assembly Conference at our upcoming Fall Assembly.** Not simply for interest, for actual prepared bids. Please consider preparing a full bid for the 2023 Spring Assembly Conference to present at our Fall or Winter Assembly. This could provide ample time for folks to come together and prepare a proper bid. As always, our Conference Advisory Committee is here to help.

As many of you remember from our Summer Assembly in June, we discussed at length a motion related to our Spring Assembly Conference. Thank you all for the feedback, attempts to edit the language and the persistence to hang in there whether you were in favor or not in favor. The collective conscience made it clear that the motion would go back to the CAC (Conference Advisory Committee) for further review. After consideration of Assembly sharing, for and against, this committee meeting agenda will have a new, simplified motion from the CAC to clarify the expectation of what will be done when there is no bid presented to the Area by a certain date. Perhaps it is time for NIA 20 to seriously consider the question – do we actually WANT a Spring Assembly Conference going forward, given these recent years of rushing to plan and regular let down when bids don't come forward in a timely manner. I urge us all to consider what we can do to lead our area to its next chapter as it relates to this event that we have waived on plenty in recent years.

We also have work underway by our second adhoc committee on document management and archival and we hope to have a system and some tutorials in place by the end of this rotation. The two online digital workspace contenders are Google Drive and Microsoft OneDrive. More to come here. This work is another area where more technology committee members could be extremely helpful.

I look forward to our time together in service, as always.

Thank you all for your dedicated service to the fellowship.

All the best,

Carmela R, Area Chair